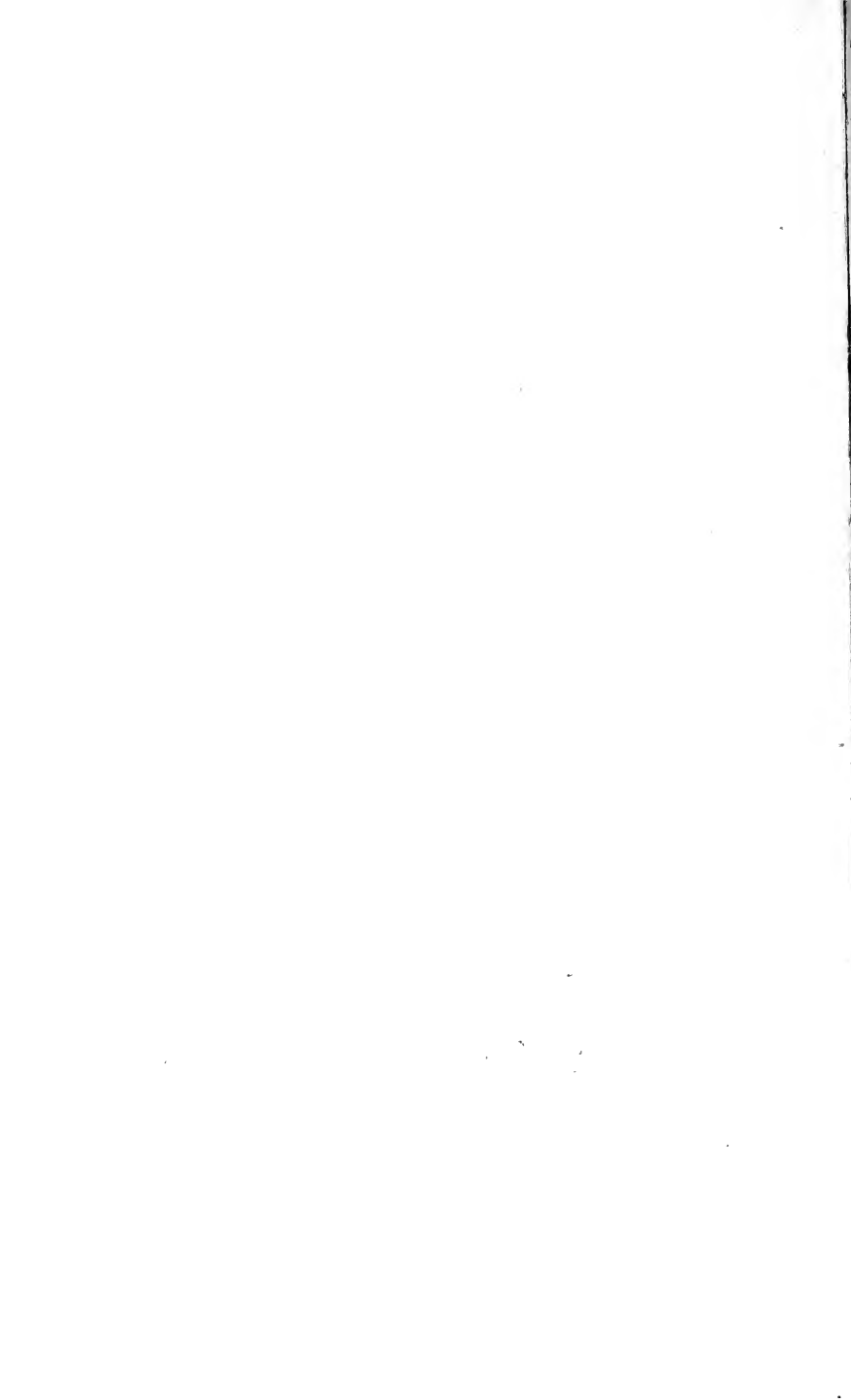


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THE COPTS,

*Some Particulars concerning the Ancient National Church of Egypt,
contained in a Letter to R. FEW, Esq., and a Transcript of
Notes made in Cairo.*

BY THE

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PRINTED BY

R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR,

FOR THE

Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt,

7, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.

[For the use of the Committee only.]

INTRODUCTION.

As the Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt have kindly expressed a wish to publish the Letter and Notes which follow, and have asked me to write an introductory statement, I will, as shortly as possible, state the facts which led to their appearance.

After a nine months' serious illness, having resigned my benefice, and being in London for a couple of days, I went one afternoon to the S.P.G. office to see my friend the Assistant Secretary, and to inquire about the chaplaincy at Sorrento. I was told there was a large meeting of great importance (it was the meeting about Special Funds), and that I could not see the Secretary. Being a country member. I decided to wait, and so went and attended "my first meeting," and voted to support the Society. Towards the end of the proceedings Mr. Few proposed a motion with regard to Christianity in Egypt and Syria. Then a pause occurred, and I feared no seconder would support this motion, which concerned what, since my visit to the East, had been my continual thought. I was very unwell and unfit to speak, and quite unprepared, but I got up and tried to say what I had longed for three years to make known.

After two months I received a letter from my agent (I was forbidden to receive letters or write much), inclosing one from Mr. Few, thanking me for my support, and asking if I could possibly see him or write to him. I made an appointment, and had the pleasure of seeing him twice for a very short time, as I passed through London before I came out here. I lunched with him on the First Sunday after Epiphany, and then read him my notes, and promised to write them out for him and send them. I was persuaded that there was a special providence of God in the remarkable chance which brought us together, and under this conviction I am thankful that these notes and my letter should be printed, and I pray that they may tend some little to God's glory, and the furtherance of Christianity in that ancient Bible land in which our nation has now so great a responsibility. My letter to Mr. Few, I think, explains what they profess to be and what they are.

W. H. O.

SORRENTO, July 23, 1883.

**.* In printing this paper it is to be understood that the Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt is not to be held responsible for any statements or opinions expressed in it.*

HOTEL SYRENE, TRAMONTANO, SORRENTO, ITALIA,
July 6, 1883.

DEAR MR. FEW,—

I have been far too long in sending you the notes I promised you about the Coptic Church, but you know that I am not allowed to write much at present, and I must plead guilty to having written and read as little as I could avoid. A kind friend has transcribed me the items from my note-book, and thrown them a little into shape, so I have no excuse now for longer delay. The jottings from my note-book do not profess to be a scholarly treatise on the Coptic Church, and perhaps may be of little value; but I hope at any rate they will interest you, and that you will be able to make them out. It was a very great interest to me at the time, and of course my impressions were very vivid then, but even now I can recall almost every little event of those delightful evenings I spent in Cairo collecting these scraps of information about the old Church of the country.

The notes, or whatever we may call them, were copied *verbatim* from my note-book, and when I explain to you how they were collected, you will understand why, sometimes, the language is strange, and the expressions used odd and unusual; for I have endeavoured to keep to just the very identical words that were uttered, and which I took down at the time in Mr. Riskgerge's house, though for the sake of clearness and

convenience, we have tried to throw them into a little order, for in my note-book I put down all that was said, and sometimes there was a digression of a most interesting character, which to a person who was not there, reads oddly in the middle of a discussion upon a totally different subject. These are all the changes I have made, with the exception of in two places verifying the references; the words are not mine, they are simply word for word what was said by those priests and others assembled at Mr. Riskgerge's house, either in English, or translated to me from Arabic by a young Copt named Hannah, teacher of English in the Coptic school at Cairo, and they were very particular to have every word translated twice out of Arabic into English, and back again into Arabic, before they allowed me to write it down, as they said, even then, in consequence of the difficulties of different languages with regard to theological terms, I might not get quite the right impression.

Perhaps you will excuse me if I just copy verbatim a part of a letter I wrote at that time to one of my sisters, and which I wrote in duplicate with post-office paper (that and my accounts being the diary I found easiest to keep). I copy you this, for it gives my impressions at the moment, though, as you will see, I was sore put to it to find time even to scribble thus much home.

PORT SAID, *March 8, 1880.*

MY DEAREST G——,

It has been utterly impossible for me to write before, as I have never had a spare minute. At Cairo I fell in with a deacon of the Coptic Church, the ancient Egyptian National Church, and of which but little is known, and I have never had a moment since, as I have spent every spare minute in making inquiries and taking full notes. It is marvellous how pure persecution has kept the faith. Nothing is known of them in the West, at least as good as nothing, for people generally do not know of their existence; they are so small and insignificant



a body, and I intend to make known what I have gleaned, if I ever get the chance !

I have visited their schools, as well as Miss Whately's and the American Presbyterian Board of Mission schools, where I was told the Copt schools were a farce and they really taught nothing, and seen them and heard them all reading the Bible in Arabic ; heard and examined them in English, dictated to them in English, and had it written for me in English, French, and Arabic, and I have kept the productions of five boys, varying from twelve to sixteen, as a sample. I was ashamed, astonished, and gratified by what I saw and heard. They want more books, as they are poor ; but they had Nelson's *Royal Readers* (a few), and some of Collins's ; and some of the boys were doing Euclid ! I had a long interview with the Patriarch, most intensely interesting, and which I hope may prove useful ; received his blessing, sherbet, cigars, narghilles, almond-comfits, and all sorts of sweets. It was a most interesting scene, but I could only write down very little there. He made me a speech for the Patriarch of Canterbury, and prayed for me. You shall see my note-book, and I can tell you full particulars. I was introduced to some of the chief Copts : their knowledge of Scripture is *wonderful*. They appeal only to Scripture and the first three Councils ; are not Eutychians (as has been ignorantly supposed) ; refuse worship or even duleia to the Blessed Virgin ; do not kiss or venerate pictures, as the Greeks, though they have them in their churches to stir up and remind people of the noble examples of the saints and martyrs, just as we have stained windows. They have no such thing as masses for either living or dead, and repudiate the idea ; *nor do they permit the solitary communion* of the celebrating priest. I trust all I have done may be of use some time. It has been a marvellous interest to me, and there are so many little things I have noticed which I can tell you better than write. The Patriarch was most kind and cordial to me, and Mr. Riskgerge, a very

learned man and a deacon (the deacons follow lay pursuits), who manages the property of the Patriarch, and gives his services for nothing, was so good as to let me go every day to his house with Joseph Hannah, a most interesting man, intensely in earnest, and anxious beyond all things for the re-awakening of his Church ; very devout ! I shall never forget his prayers with and for me the day of my leaving Cairo, and his refusal to accept anything (except a little blotting-paper and foolscap) for his services, only asking me to send him out Butler's *Analogy*, Pearson on *The Creed*, Paley's *Evidences*, and any books I could get for the Coptic schools. He was most useful to me, as he has been to others before me, notably the Bishop of Ohio, who has published a small and imperfect edition of the Coptic liturgy as now used, and which was translated by Joseph Hannah. . . .

Well, Joseph Hannah was my interpreter, and took me to Mr. Riskgerge's house (he had tutored his sons, and is English teacher in the Copt schools). There I met each night a number of priests, dignitaries, and learned Copts. We went through all the essential matters and truths of Christianity. It was one of the most interesting events of my life, so far, as I could not help feeling something might come of it, in God's providence ; and I am quite sure the Copts thought so, for each evening fresh dignitaries turned up, and they were so particular that I took down rightly what was said, that some things we actually had read over four times, backwards and forwards, in Arabic and English. It was a curious scene : the two hanging lamps, and all the funny robes and head-dresses of the dignitaries, like chimney-pots without brims, and black veils over. We sat all round the room on settees, and they smoked cigarettes and narghilles or hubble-bubbles, and we had coffee, very strong, sweet, and muddy, as all Turkish coffee is ; sometimes it had scent in. I had a little octagonal table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, put in front of me, which reached about up to my knees. At first I

wrote in pencil, but afterwards I thought it better to write in ink, and I had one of the young Riskgerge's ink-horns and a reed pen. I was obliged for civility's sake, to use the table, so I reclined on the settee and felt quite Eastern: I thought myself a scribe. It really has been a very wonderful adventure, and I only hope may be of use. . . .

I think I was as much surprised as anything with the marvellous acquaintance the Copts showed with Holy Scripture. I think it is possibly owing to the American and Miss Whately's schools, which have awakened an interest. Their applications of Scripture were so ready and so intelligent, and they seemed quite ready to give a reason at once from Scripture for all I asked them. Of course those Copts I met were the best and most intellectual sample; but a Church with people like those in it is certainly neither "absolutely dead" nor "*completely smothered* in superstition and idolatry," as the guide-books and superficial observers say. At all events, if it is, there has been a wonderful awakening among the dry bones! To me their old-world ways and "deadness" is the very source of interest, for I want to discover the points of similarity with ourselves; and their customs, which *have never changed*, shed so much light upon our own, and confirm me more than ever in the belief that our branch of the Church Catholic has preserved the essentials, and is in the right against Rome. . . .

I pass on at once to give you a little account of my formal interview with the Patriarch of the Copts in his palace at Cairo—really an old monastery above the Coptic school. I had been very anxious for the interview, and asked Hannah several times when I could go, and had written a letter asking for an interview which had been mis-sent to Alexandria and was returned to me marked "unknown;" so that after visiting the Copt schools and examining the children, I was rather astonished by Hannah saying, "Will you visit the Patriarch now?" I was ushered up stairs, Hannah explaining that any one might go in,

as he sat in public all morning, according to Eastern usages. I was, before I knew where I was, ushered into a large salon with divans all round, and at the end, talking to two or three dignitaries, sat the Patriarch. The room was nearly full of people sitting on the divans; and I suppose my visit was expected, for the Patriarch rose to receive me, and motioned me to come and sit by him at the top of the room; and then cigars, coffee, sweets, liqueurs, and narghilles were brought in. Of course I could only understand what Hannah translated to me, and it was exceedingly difficult to make any notes at the time; but I will just transcribe what I wrote down in my note-book, only premising that very much more was both said and done than I was able to jot down, as while I wrote something the Patriarch would ask a question. I gave him a photograph of my vicarage in England, which pleased them all very much; and they were very curious about my servants, who appeared on the lawn and at the windows: also a photograph of my church exterior—they wanted much to know what it was like inside. And I happened also to have a photograph of Ripon Cathedral exterior, and that took the Patriarch's fancy so much that I was obliged to give it him. He inquired much about our cathedrals and bishops, but I must now simply copy my notes.

These are the notes verbatim:—

“The Patriarch says, ‘It has been in his heart to thank God and Jesus Christ that you have come to Cairo, and that He has put it in your mind to be interested in our ancient Church. He desires that all your exertions may produce good fruits.’

“Again, he prays God ‘that our Lord Jesus Christ may produce all my exertions into good fruits.’ Here all those present said something. Then syrup, &c., was handed round.

“‘It displeases the Patriarch he has much sorrow that I have a cold.’

“‘I am to consider this [his house] my home while I am in Cairo.’ (Coffee and cigars.) Then a long conversation about

Eutychianism : all I have down are these words. (Sweets and narghilles brought in by two little black boys.)

“‘Eutyches from Constantinople not an Egyptian, so how can we follow him here?’

“‘What people say about Eutyches is a false accusation. It is a work of God to refute this statement—all the Copts are one nation.’”

They then spoke about Protestant sects, but I have no notes.

“‘The Copt belief is unchanged.’

“‘The Patriarch and priests and principal men of the Copts present in this room agree—

“‘That the Mohammedan persecutions in past times have, *under the hand of God*, or under Providence, been the means of preserving the Coptic Church pure, by preventing the spread of the Pope of Rome’s, or any other power’ (to this some demurred, as they did not wish to insinuate anything against any other branch of the Catholic or Universal Church, and asked me not to publish that clause unless I carefully explained it) ‘and the introduction of any schism.’

“‘The politics of the world have been overruled by God to the preservation of the purity of His Church.’

“‘The Patriarch desires and prays for the unity of all the true Christian Churches,’ and is one of the most earnest in his desires for the unity of all Christians. He desired me to convey his brotherly greetings and the account of this meeting to the Patriarch of Canterbury, but I regret to confess I have never done so, as the opportunity has never offered itself, and I have shrunk from pushing myself forward, as I was told all this had been already far better done, and that all I had gleaned was already well known.”

He then said he would pray for me ; and I have only these words written down :

“‘May our Lord preserve thee.’

“‘ May our Lord Jesus give you a safe journey and go with you in Jerusalem and in England, and a pure and holy mouth to speak of all the Christians with all good.’

“ He prays *I* individually may be blessed, I and all my words and everything I do.

“ Then he blessed me and touched my temples ; and said that he prayed that the archangels and angels, and cherubim and seraphim, may accompany me, and light my road ; and commended me to the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit.”

I regret I was never able to visit him again.

Yours very sincerely,

W. H. OXLEY.

NOTES ON THE COPTIC CHURCH,

AS WRITTEN DOWN AT THE VARIOUS INTERVIEWS AT

MR. RISKGERGE'S HOUSE.

It is the belief of the Coptic Church that the Mohammedan persecutions have been the means, under God, of preserving her faith pure, by preventing the spread of the power of the Pope of Rome, or the introduction of any other schism. The politics of the world have thus been overruled by God for the preservation of the purity of this branch of His Church.

The accusation of Eutychianism, so often brought against her, is false--a vulgar error. She is anxious that this should be thoroughly understood.

The Holy Scriptures are the foundation on which she is built. All her actions and doings are referred to them. (The holy apostle said that the work of every man shall be proved, of what sort it is--gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: 1 Cor. iii., 12, 13.)

The Coptic Church appeals to the first three councils, Nicæa, Constantinople, and Ephesus, but that of Chalcedon¹ she does not acknowledge.

The Patriarch is most earnest in his desire for the unity of all Christian Churches.

¹ With regard to the Council of Chalcedon, it was stated on more than one occasion that it was not on doctrinal grounds that the Copts refuse to acknowledge this as a general council, but they assert that it was not a general council, as their Church was not represented at it, either because their bishops were not invited to attend (this seemed the general opinion) or because they did not wait till they arrived. Of course if this is really the case it would make a considerable difference in the ecclesiastical position.--W. H. OXLEY.

OF SACRAMENTS.

We say there are seven sacraments, viz. :—

1. Baptism.
2. Eucharist.
3. Holy Orders.
4. Chrism or Confirmation.
5. Matrimony.
6. Confession.
7. Extreme Unction.

The seven sacraments are the columns or pillars of the Church (Proverbs ix., 1—6, is considered a prophecy in relation to them), for every one of them has a particular invisible effect, as well as the outward visible effect (sign?).

(*Note.*—They agree to the statement of Hooker, that the sacraments are the extension of the Incarnation, a widening or growing out of it.)

À propos to the Western use of the Roman Communion, in denying the cup to the laity, they said, “The sacraments must be neither taken from, nor added to, for Christ was not in want of anything which people can give to Him.” Specially with regard to sacraments, “Do this, eat this, drink this,” &c., was Christ’s command, whether good came from it or not.

Remember St. Paul, “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,” &c. (1 Cor. xi. 23—25.) “. . . Likewise after supper he took the cup. . . . Drink ye all of this. . . .”

OF BAPTISM.

This is the first of sacraments.

Without faith baptism is useless.

In baptism we become brethren of Christ and sons of God. “Henceforth I will not call you,” or “Wherefore thou art no more” “a servant but a son,” &c. (Gal. iv. 7).

The baptism of infants is lawful, in case of necessity, but is not usual, and must be administered by a priest or *deacon*, at any rate. Lay baptism is not allowed on any grounds. Every one (any lay person?) who robs (administers?) one of the holy sacraments, is considered a blasphemer, for he is not given the power of the Holy Ghost, and there apostolic order will not be found. (This was *à propos* of baptism by women in case of emergency.) Christ has

blown (breathed?) into the face of His twelve apostles, and said, "Accept the gift of," or "Receive ye," "the Holy Ghost" (St. John xx. 22). Still they did not proceed on any doing (official work?) till they received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day (day of Pentecost); then Peter began to preach, and he baptised three thousand.

Baptism must always be in church, except in cases of extreme necessity. Even kings' children must be brought to church.

The font is of hewn stone, and has been blessed by the bishop.

The usual age at which people are baptised is above twelve, in order that they may, in their own persons, "confess with the mouth," and renounce all things contrary to Christ. The child is either "mature," *i.e.* above twelve, or if under, he must have one sponsor, a good living man (a man of good life), who confesses the faith and renounces sin on his behalf. The sponsor also engages to teach the child the Christian religion, as soon as he is able to learn, and he will likewise present him to the Church.

The child is thrice immersed, and the words, "I baptise thee M. or N. in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," are thrice repeated.

At the first repetition the child is immersed to navel.

At the second, to neck.

At the third, completely under the water.

If the baptised person has only received the water, and not the laying-on of hands, his baptism is not complete, and he has not received the new birth of the Spirit, for in confirmation the Holy Spirit is given by the laying-on of hands. (It is the complement or filling-up of baptism, a part of the ceremony, and takes place directly after.)

The priest in himself has not the right or power of "the laying-on of hands," but as the holy chrism (sacred oil) is blessed by a "laying-on of hands" of all the bishops, it is considered the same thing as if all the bishops of the whole Church had laid their hands on him (the person confirmed). It is impossible for bishops to baptise, for if a person is baptised by a bishop he must not receive the chrism, but (in practice) the bishop, out of a sense of communion with his brethren who have laid their hands on it (the chrism), generally uses it, as the Church might think him proud. In administering the chrism, the priest takes it on his thumb, and crosses with it thirty-six times, as he places it on all the members of the child's body. (The Greeks only do it nine times.)

If a child dies without confirmation (chrism), the baptism is considered useless.

Cornelius, the centurion, when he asked St. Peter to teach him, received the Holy Ghost before baptism, as a sign that St. Peter was to baptise the Gentiles, which before he had been afraid to do.

The water *must* be blessed with chrism, and the child *must* receive the Eucharist afterwards, for Christ has said, "He who will not eat my body, &c., has no life in him;" or, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (St. John vi., 53), and the child must have the life of Christ.

The lections read at baptisms are:—Titus ii. 11—iii., 7; 1 St. John v., 5—13; Acts viii., 26 to end; St. John iii., 1—22.

OF THE EUCHARIST.

The bread must be fresh, viz. baked on the same day as the service is held, early in the morning, and must be entirely of (Egyptian) wheat, *leavened*. "Christ took bread" (meaning *leavened bread*). He did not say, "I am the *unleavened bread*" (St. John vi. 35). In the East the word "*bread*" indicates "*leavened bread*," but the *thin cake* or *wafer* is the *unleavened bread*, and Christ said "*bread*." The Psalms are read over the bread, while it is still dough. It must be made and baked in the church with fresh water. (There is a well in all or most of the churches.) No salt is added to it, for it is a mineral and an alloy; in logic "accident" or "quality," and is not of the essence of the bread.

The bread must be stamped with a seal, which bears for design Jesus Christ in the centre, the twelve Apostles round, and is surrounded with the inscription, "Holy is God; Holy is the Almighty; Holy is the living Immortal."

The wine must be of raisins (*new* dry grapes) or of *fresh grapes*. It is squeezed for the particular purpose in every church. (The priest may not consecrate wine of the market.) For Christ said, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine (vintage), until that day that I drink it *new* in the kingdom of God" (St. Mark xiv. 25). In the Coptic and Arabic versions, the words "fruit of the vine" is translated "vintage," which means "the offspring of the vine," "what is born of the vine." It is made when needed, and care is taken to keep it pure.

At the service they will offer to the priest three loaves in a charger, of which he will choose the best, and a small glass phial containing the wine. (The deacons have first said thirty-six Psalms over the bread, and three chapters of the Testament, and twelve prayers.) The priest smells the wine, lest it should be sour like vinegar, and, if sour, he gives it back to the deacon, and sends to another church to get wine. After the wine is made it is put into large glass jars by the Agnostos, with baskets or not (covered with wicker-work). In forty or sixty days he will fine it. (All will settle; it cleans itself.) It is then carefully removed to other glasses. (They gave me samples to taste. It was sweet, and like Skeffington's sacramental wine.)

The priest must fast at least nine hours, and all the communicants, before partaking. (They must not even take liquid or snuff, nor may they smoke.) Adults must fast from eight o'clock the previous evening. Where there is a large congregation, there may be, not *must* be, a celebration every day (but not in the smaller churches). In Lent there must be a service of the Holy Communion every day in all the churches, and for the rest of the year in each church on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, and all saints' days.

The priest never communicates alone; there must always be a deacon as well, or one communicant (to represent the laity).

Sometimes forty people communicate.

Only one loaf is offered. However many communicate, it is divided among them. "We believe the loaf is mysteriously converted. We believe it becomes the body of Christ, and is sufficient."

The bread and wine consecrated are mysteriously converted into the body and blood of Christ. *Apparently* or *visibly* they are *simple bread and wine still*, but they are in truth the body and blood of Christ to the faithful partakers.

"Christ gave to His disciples body or bread." Bread still; we see it bread, but its effect and its virtue is the body of Christ.

The altar, or Lord's table, may be of wood or stone indifferently, but there must be in the table of stone a slab of wood blessed or consecrated. The holy slab must also be in the wooden altar. The slab is blessed with a particular prayer and chrism. *The mystery is not in the wood or stone, but in the Eucharist.* "You may celebrate the Eucharist in any place—in a tent, or in a house, or in the desert, or in a church, for God was pleased with the offering of the

children of Israel in the tent, more than in the *house* which Solomon built."

The Eucharist is reserved *for the sick*, and taken to them if needed (it is also reserved for the newly baptised); but it is never reserved in the Church for the purpose of worship (as is the Roman use).

Confession always before reception.

The priest is responsible for the soul of the man, who must come to him to see if he is in a fit state of soul.

Priest and Patriarch—all must confess.

The RULE of the Coptic Church is that every one should communicate every fortnight; the priests and deacons every day; but neither of these rules is strictly kept, some not partaking for two or three years. The priest calls on people at home, and exhorts them to confession and communion.

A celebration on Holy Thursday, when many communicate.

There is never a night communion; at Easter, Christmas, and the Epiphany, a celebration at one o'clock in the morning.

During the fifty-five days of Lent, Saturdays and Sundays excepted, communion is taken at noon.

OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

The Coptic Church believes that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Eternal with the Father, who is equal to the Father in substance (for the Two Persons *are one substance*, not *of* one substance), not created but begotten, in fulness of time took a perfect manhood—body, soul, and spirit—of the Virgin Mary. ("We are so strict in our idiom, we do not say 'became' man.") The Holy Spirit purified the body, and the Son took it of the Virgin Mary. Christ was born of the seed of the woman, not of the seed of man, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. (The Holy Spirit purified Mary, and the Son took from her the human nature.) ("We are not Nestorians; Nestorius made two persons in the Son.")

The manhood was joined to the Godhead in the person of the Eternal Word. This union was *Light by Light*. If the flames of two candles are put together it makes one light, but does not mix them.

The Godhead was not converted or changed into manhood, nor the manhood into Godhead, but the two natures are distinct in the

one person of Christ. They can never be separated, or mixed or divided.

When the two natures are connected, so also are the two wills, for every nature has its own actions, and as the natures are connected, so also are the wills, and all the actions are related to the one Christ.

In the Bible we cannot distinguish the voices of the Christ, and refer them to the human or divine nature, for in this case the union would not be complete. (For Cyril wrote twelve excommunications against Nestor, in which he said, "Any one who distinguishes the voices of Christ which are written in the Holy Scriptures, and refers some to one and some to the other, and will not make them in one connection (union), he will be excommunicate.")

OF REDEMPTION.

When we were enemies to God, He made peace with us by the death of His Son, for the Apostle says that the Mediator between God and man is the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. ii. 5). For the reason for enmity is that the man was formed of the earth, and God gave him the breath of life, which is immortal, that he and his seed might live for ever; Eve was formed of Adam; the woman sinned and then the man, therefore the curse was on mankind, and they became enemies to God. As the sin was produced of the woman first, so salvation was to come of the woman first.

From the woman came Christ, who is not of the seed of the old Adam, to save the first (or old) Adam and his seed; for there is a great difference between God the Most High, and the immortal man, and Christ is the means of redemption and reconciliation between the two, for He is of the two natures of God and man that He may have the office (character) or relation of mediator between the two.

The sin of the first Adam was not the reason of the Incarnation. St. John the Evangelist said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (St. John i. 18). Thus the Incarnation was necessary that we might see God in His only Son, Jesus Christ, for if God was never seen at any time, how can we see Him?

The Coptic Church does not consider that the fall of Adam was

necessary to the Incarnation, but that the Incarnation was necessary to join us to God and God to us, and we became brethren of Christ and sons of God by baptism, which is the fruit of (extension of) the Incarnation.

Christ bore (took on Himself) the curse, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13).

He died for the sins of the whole world, for the grace was poured out freely—"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (St. John i. 17).

The Coptic Church does not believe in or acknowledge purgatory ; every one is rewarded according to his worthiness.

Regarding Christ's descent into hell, the Coptic Church believes that Adam and all the old fathers before the Incarnation were in bondage to Satan—"spirits in prison" (1 St. Peter iii. 19) ; and that Christ went down into hell to preach to them of the redemption. In proof of this they cite the fact of the Witch of Endor raising the spirit of the prophet Samuel, who spoke with Saul and prophesied of his death on the morrow (1 Sam. xxviii. 14-19).

The Book does not say anything about the state of the departed immediately after death. Christ's words to the penitent thief are a proof that the just will all have a place.

In the Apocalypse, St. John says he saw the "heavenly (new) Jerusalem coming down from the Father (God) out of heaven, (prepared) as a bride decked (adorned) for her husband" (Rev. xxi. 2), and he described her like things we can view.

The Coptic Church believes intelligently in hell and fire, &c., as figurative expressions—worm of conscience, fire of remorse, &c. ; and in heaven, as suited to our ideas : the former a spiritual misery, the latter a spiritual happiness greater than we can conceive. They are expressed in a way and by things suited to our comprehension now—*e.g.* the beauty of the new Jerusalem is spoken of as consisting in gold and precious stones, &c.

Man, having a free will, he can do either good or evil ; if he does good before the Lord he will inherit eternal life, if evil, eternal misery. In the case of his removal in the instant of his corruption, everlasting misery and everlasting torment.

Man is composed of four elements, and when he dies the elements are re-distributed. As soon as he dies, two elements, viz. air and fire (or heat) are gone ; the earth and water will flow away (dissolve) ; he will return to dust ; the case, the body, has decomposed, the spirit will return to God who gave it.

The body does not die ; it is only decomposed.

The Resurrection is the most important of all Christian truths.

The Ascension is as the rest.

Christ is the first-fruits of them that slept ; *i.e.* of the "Resurrection." Christ rose with the same body He took from Adam.

OF BURIAL.

The body is washed, perfumed, and laid out ; the hands crossed on the breast. It is always wrapped in a shroud, and placed in a coffin, sometimes in lead, and buried in the earth. (Man must take care of his soul, not of his body.) The feet are always towards the east, the head to the west.

The funeral service is always held in the church ; there is generally a short prayer at the grave, but not always—it is not necessary.

À *propos* to masses for the departed, the Holy Communion is not celebrated at the funeral. "The Eucharist is the food of the living, not of the dead."

OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

The Coptic Church says : " We must give the Blessed Virgin the highest honour and blessedness, but we cannot give her worship, or we should be infidels and make two gods."

OF SERMONS.

The sermons used are the writings of the holy fathers of the Church, *e.g.* St. Basileus, St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom. This is in order that the priests may not introduce foreign things or strange doctrines into the minds of the people ; they are content with reading the old fathers. But it is lawful if there is any preacher who is a thoroughly learned man, and whose works are of good authority, for him to preach a sermon of his own in the presence of the Bishop or Patriarch ; but this is done only in the cathedral church of the diocese.

OF CANDLES, INCENSE, AND PICTURES.

" Our Church has a custom to use candles, for two reasons—first, they preach to the people that their hearts may be enlightened

like the shining of a candle, and they also preach to us of Christ as the Light of the world, and point us to follow His example.

Incense we use as a proof or type of the going-up of the prayers, like the twenty-four elders, &c. (Rev. v. 8, and viii. 3, 4). Our Church is a copy of the heavenly worship."

The pictures in the churches are not for devotion (according to the idea which is common in the Presbyterian Church), but they are as a preaching to the people of the saints and martyrs who were crowned, in order that they may follow their example. The Copts do not *ever* kiss pictures. No worship or reverence is paid, except to God only.

THE COPTIC CONFSSION OF FAITH.

(Taken out of the Liturgy in use in the Coptic Church.)

I believe, believe, believe and confess to the last breath, that this is the holy and living body which Thine only Son, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, took from St. Mary, our Lady, the Mother of God, the holy St. Mary, and made it one with His Godhead, without confusion or mixture or changing, and did confess the good confession of His own free will, and with His own will gave it for us upon the wood of the holy Cross. Truly I believe that His Godhead did not separate from His manhood for one moment nor the least space of time. It is given for our salvation, and for the forgiveness of our sins, and for eternal life, to all who receive it.

I believe, I believe, I believe that this is true. Amen.

OF ORDERS IN THE COPTIC CHURCH.

There are three orders of deacons:—

1. Agnostos, or sacristan, who prepares the bread, and discharges the office of sexton. This is the lowest rank. The agnostos is only ordained by shaving the hair with scissors, and prayers are made that God will accept him as deacon. He may be ordained at any age.

2. Apodeakon, upper deacon or reader, who reads the Epistle in Coptic and Arabic, and leads the singing, and can give the cup in the Communion to the people. He may be ordained as soon as he can read well. He helps to administer the alms of the poor, and is the agent of the bishop (churchwarden?). He resolves difficulties

between the people of his own church, and refers them to the bishop. In every church there must be at least one. He is ordained by laying-on of hands of the bishop or patriarch "touching the temples" "that God may give him understanding."

3. Deacon, the highest rank, who must be at least twenty-five years old, is ordained by placing the hands of the bishop or patriarch on his head; after prayers and receiving Communion, the patriarch or bishop blows in his mouth, and says to him, "Accept the gift of the Holy Ghost." He proceeds to the priesthood, if elected by the people, and if married. A deacon must be at least thirty years old before being ordained priest, but thirty-five or so is a more usual age. The deacons are allowed to work, if the support of the church is not sufficient. The priest must be elected by the people's voice. (Mr. Riskgerge gives his services freely, and receives no payment from the church.)

The deacons may only baptise in case of extreme necessity. These lower orders are more as orders of honour than as being of the constitution of the Church.


The priest is ordained either by the patriarch and two bishops, or by three bishops if no patriarch, the same words being used as at the ordination of a deacon—"Accept the gift of the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Holy Church of God." There are also special prayers for him who is ordained, of which the following is the substance of one:—"O Lord, pour down Thy Holy Spirit on this priest, not by the laying-on of our hands—who are sinful—but let Thy Holy Ghost be shed on Thy servant, N. or M., to consecrate him for Thy sacred services." This is after the prayers of thanks which are offered for him. The consecrated bread is placed in his hand by the bishop, after he has been vested by the patriarch in a white robe, as for the mass. Marriage is compulsory before ordination. No priest may take a second wife.

The jeromānos, or arch-priest, is a rank of honour, and corresponds to the Western 'archdeacon.' He is the tongue of the bishop; he settles judicial matters, and sees that the repairs of churches are made.

The bishop must be elected by the majority of the principal people of his diocese; there must be one in every province.

The bishop must be either a monk or a widower-priest, for St. Paul said, "He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Cor. vii. 33); and the head shepherd should do his best for the sheep.

When there is a vacancy, the principal people of the diocese who recommend the bishop-elect, must do so in writing. A report is drawn up, which is signed by them, by three or four priests, and by the arch-priest. A deputation presents it to the patriarch, who sends for the bishop-elect. He is brought under guard (not knowing he is to be consecrated), lest he should flee from the responsibility of the office. He is kept safe under guard till his consecration. If he is not a monk, the patriarch prays for him the prayer of monkhood, and gives him the vow and robe of a monk. He must fast from 6 P.M. Saturday, till after his consecration, which takes place on the Sunday, when at least two bishops must be ready to assist the patriarch at the ceremony. (There are often seven or more.) After the reading of the Gospel, two bishops go and bring him from his place of guard. He is in his monk's dress; the arch-priest precedes him, carrying the Gospel. As soon as the bishop-elect reaches the sanctuary the arch-priest reads aloud the report of his recommendation, then the patriarch takes off his turban or cap, and either mentions him by name, or—which is most usual—gives him a new one, saying, *e.g.* “John, we call him, as bishop of the Province of . . .” He then kneels down, and they lay their hands on his head, and the patriarch turns to the east and prays the prayer of thanksgiving, and then turns to him and recites the prayer of consecration. Immediately after the consecration the deacon declares to the people that he is a bishop, and the patriarch turns to the east and makes the prayer of supplication for his acceptance. Then, turning to the bishop, he declares to him the duties of his office, and he then changes his dress to the robe of a bishop, and puts on the crown or mitre. He then receives him in the temple (the holy of holies, corresponding to our “sanctuary”), and they, with the other consecrating bishops, all partake together of the Holy Communion. He assists in the consecration of the Eucharist, each bishop taking some part of the service.

After partaking in the service and Communion, the patriarch blows three times in his mouth, and gives him a rod with two serpents and a cross  in his left hand, and says, “Govern with this rod the people of God; you engage yourself to it.”

He then gives him the cross, which he holds in his right hand—the rod is in his left—and says, “With that you will bless the people of God; remember that on this sign (or emblem) Jesus Christ was crucified” (1 St. Peter v. 2, 3).

The patriarch gives him letters of orders containing the Nicene Creed, which may be read by the priests to the people of his new diocese in his cathedral, he meanwhile sitting on his throne. He keeps the letters of orders.

Should a bishop be sick or deranged, another may not be consecrated to fill his place till he is dead, but an arch-priest may administer his diocese. A bishop may not be translated to another diocese, though he may be deposed for a grievous crime by the college of bishops and the patriarch.

In every province there must be a metropolitan. He stands in the same relation to the bishops as the arch-priest does to the priests. He is placed where there is a large town.

St. Mark is claimed as the first patriarch of Alexandria; the present one is the hundred and twelfth. In one of the churches there is kept, in Arabic, a list of their names and a record of their history.

The patriarch takes his title from Alexandria, the name of the ancient See, but he *lives* at Cairo, since that contains a larger population, as well as being the seat of government. He is also called the Pope of Africa; he lives alone with a few priests; he is always a monk; he has never been a bishop previously, the idea being that no one should be consecrated twice over.

When a patriarch dies all the bishops and principal men of the Coptic Church meet together, and they inquire of the heads of convents who is equal to that office. The heads of convents name the suitable candidates, and from them the bishops, assisted by the principal men, select two or three. If the whole assembly agree on one particular person, he will be the patriarch; but if they differ, a special service of the Holy Communion is held on three consecutive days. It is celebrated by the bishops, who all communicate. This is in order that they may earnestly pray to ask God and Jesus Christ to direct their choice. At the end of the third service they tell a little boy to take one of the names out of a silk cloth (in which they have been placed on the altar-table) in the presence of the assembled bishops and principal men. They then send and bring from the convent the person thus selected, under a guard from the Egyptian government, in case he should flee. He is kept under guard until his consecration. On Sunday (*i.e.* after midnight on Saturday) he is brought to the steps of the temple, and there *ordained* as bishop, the highest bishop performing the

ceremony (*e.g.* the metropolitan of Jerusalem or of Abyssinia ; but the latter is generally too far away to come).

He is then taken up the steps of the temple—seven in number—and on each step they recite a particular prayer. As soon as he arrives at the seventh step the bishops come down to the sixth and lay down their crowns, and the patriarch puts on his. Then the archdeacon of the cathedral says a prayer, in which he mentions all his names—“Head of the Bishops, Pope of Alexandria, Abyssinia, Nubia, and all Africa.”

The patriarch then reads the Gospel : “ I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep,” &c. (St. John x. 14). His cross and rod are then placed on the table, and, after completing the consecration, all the bishops take the Communion from his hands. The highest bishop will blow in his mouth three times, and say, “Accept the gift of the Holy Spirit,” and then he bids him to take the rod and cross from the Lord’s table, and he (the patriarch) makes service two days more with the bishops, &c., who then return to their own dioceses.

THE END.





